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THROUGH THE MIST

HAROLD F. BARBER

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THROUGH THE MIST

Six Glimpses of Nature

by

HAROLD F. BARBER

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Foreword

In printing these little mood-crystals, I am yielding to the requests of some of my friends—"spiritual collaborators by consent"—realizing fully that few there be to whom they will mean much.

Words, after all, are difficult material; they are bits of mosaic—each has its own definite color and precision of shape. But the artist must choose and arrange so that the finished picture will possess, to the greatest possible degree, the softness of shading, the beauty of line and color, of a painting.

To those few whose vision is such as to discover beauty herein, this little volume is dedicated: and to all such I extend my thanks for the opportunity of adding, in some slight measure, to the beauty that is in the world.

H. F. B.

NOCTURNE

THE LITTLE RIVER

THE GREAT HILLS

CLAIR DE LUNE

OCTOBER WINE

CREPUSCULE

Nocturne

> The music went on, a wild passion in the sound; with a persistent, resonant throbbing under all. Great, jagged rocks were in it, tall cliffs 'gainst which the sea dashed high its flying spray; while from above the moon looked down in calm serenity.

The passion of the rocks, of the moon, of the throbbing sea—'tis the passion of my heart!

> The music ceased, but what a harmony the soul retains! What a horrid clamor would be the speech of man, or the written word, or the presence of a fellow-creature!

There is no true speech but the song of the sea, or the thundering tones of the frowning cliffs, or the benediction of the moon.

Let me forget the complex day, the pollutions of mortality; let me shake off the obscure veil of every-day existence; let me unshamed draw near to the great Mother-heart, and know from whence I sprung.

Nature-Mother, this thy child is a mortal, his nature is but human nature, but to-night he is at one with thee.

O Mother, we thy children have forsaken thee to follow strange gods of our own fancying. Once we worshipped thee alone, at the rising of the sun, in the great forest, by the sea, or under the moon and the starry skies.

Teach us, thy children, yet again "thine ancient wisdom and austere control." the eternal miracle of thy beauty, ever changing. never waning; teach us yet again, thou God-Mother; for we are flesh of thy flesh, spirit of thy spirit; thou the fount, unpolluted and pure.

The Little River

Hush! Why is everything so still?
The little river is dead!

Quietly she lies in her bed, with the brown leaves of Autumn strewed about her, with the bare branches bending sorrowfully over her resting-place. She that of old was so carefree, with her joy in the bright Summer weather; she who in her dark beauty showed so clearly her pleasure of the happy blue sky and the bright little clouds which continually smiled on her; she who wore the white lilies on her breast that bright June morning, is dead.

There is no motion of her breast, not a stir of the little hands which reach out into the shore here and there; and how pale and gray she has grown! "Death-still, life-sweet,"—how terribly still! And yet,

I am glad that the little river is dead. Oh, friend of my Summer days, my heart also is dead.

The Great Hills

Up, up, up through the sifting snow, in the unearthly stillness of the great firs, where only a breath of the raging tempest can penetrate. Up, up, and still up, laboriously forging ahead. The ancient moss on the time-old tree-trunks, the solid shapes of the snow-laden firs, and the faint sighing of the storm in the topmost branches, far, far above, all weave a silence which penetrates the soul.

Up, up, until the trees grow smaller and smaller, while the wind and snow continually increase in violence, and the cold is more piercingly felt.

At last the border of the tree-kingdom is reached—not a sentinel stands out beyond this line, above which lies the Empire of the Upper Air. Up there the earth and the forces of the air are supreme in all their wild and primal strength.

No vegetation appears above the snow, wind-packed hard as ice—no shelter; the cold seeks out every crack and crevice, and the screaming, screeching tempest blows the storm-arrows like shot against the face.

Great rocks are piled high, falling off sheer into gorges hundreds of feet below; sharp ridges lead straight up to the wind-scoured summits of the Pyramids of Time—sharp ridges, which jut from the earth's up-heaved crust straight out into the elements sweeping over them in diabolical fury. All the forces of the upper air are guarding the Spirit of the Great Hills in its holy of holies against the foot of man.

A wild feeling of battle comes over me as I take up the final struggle to the goal Leaning hard against the force of the sleet, and covering my face to prevent its freezing, I shout defiance at the top of my lungs; and though the blasphemy is smothered at my lips by the wind-guardian, I know that no defense of Nature ever yet withstood the will of Man the Mortal.

Clair De Lune

The moon at its full splendor on a royal winter's night—a night with only enough frost to more sharply define the outline of its circle and to take away all trace of gold, leaving only silver white in its magic shining.

Snow below to catch each silver beam and keep it alive, filling the glade below the tall trees with a wonderful unearthly light —bright above, ghostly below, down through the hollows of the little rounded hills.

As I look full into that Face of Beauty I sink to my knees, then full on my back in the snow, held by the magic of that Face above me with its spell so soft, yet so powerfully insistent.

Involuntarily I catch my breath and open wide my arms, lying there with every muscle relaxed, almost panting with — WHAT ?

October Wine

In October Mother Earth serves wine to her children. There are those who drink not; but others become fairly drunken with the red and yellow wines of the trees, and the strong spirits of the keen, clear air; and these have visions not easily forgotten.

A hard rain had ceased with the dawn, and the day broke clear and cold—the first day of that season called by man "October."

All the air was peopled by the autumn-fairies, who, riding on the strong west wind, chased leaves and bits of paper along the city streets, and sang and laughed derisively as they shouted to the city folk of approaching Winter.

But outside the town, in the fields and woods, they were as happy as happy could be, and the mocking laughter with which they told of Winter in the city gave way to sheer delight at finding themselves in their old familiar playgrounds once more.

The morning air was washed clean as a lens of purest glass to magnify each tiny leaf and blade, and each had its fairy who jumped up and down in glee, singing his little elfin song, "See my little red leaf—red, red, red!" "Not that fellow, mine is yellow, I chose this instead!"

"These little transient leaves so gay, live a day, then fall away; but each year I come here to play upon this dear old stump of gray."

"Blueberry bushes grow all about, for fairies to skip on and dance and shout—and each the identical crimson shade, isn't it wonderful how they are made!"—these and many another little elf-song they sang.

A band of them were squeezing the scent from sweet fern and juniper by the path; another merry crowd were pulling off yellow pine-needles and throwing them down helter-skelter so that

they stuck up in all directions; and what hosts of them were dancing on the river, laughing in the sunlight, singing and shouting for joy!

Their song was loudest because there was so many of them, but each and every one of all the fairies, though singing his own little song, whether of gray blade, or brown leaf, or yet scarlet or gold; whether of sober stump or golden sunlight or blue water or white cloud, each sang in the same key as all the others, so that the whole earth was filled with the sound as of one great chord of majestic harmony.

And I came among my fellows, and the wine died out in me, so that I saw no more visions.

Crepuscule

Beyond the expanse of long thin marsh-grass, matted by the cold gray wind of Autumn, is a bordering of black pines, silhouetted in the afterglow; low and black, a continuous line. The tinted sky above bears little detached masses of driving clouds, scurrying onward, swift and inevitable.

(The cold gray wind fills the air with a faint sighing from the distant line of pines.)

Yonder the silver sickle moon, with one star, a diminutive arc light, throwing off its tiny rays in a continuous shower.

(The cold gray wind has swept the starry spaces clean.)

The skyline reveals no distances; 'tis as if the same canvas held the crescent and its satelite, and the scurrying clouds, and the black pines.

(The cold gray wind blows through heaven and earth alike.)

The nearness of the heavens is as the common nearness of the earth, but the ghostly gray of the marsh and the Plutonian shade of the fringing rim are unearthly. In this clear air heaven is as near as earth, earth as unreal as heaven.

(The cold gray wind blows through the soul, as through the pines, and the starry spaces.)

'Tis the one moment of the day when the world is in the act of giving over earth's reign of light for heaven's reign of darkness.

"Out of the day's deceiving light"
I stand, at threshold of the night;
I look toward heaven — 'tis day I see;
And earth's day forms, how dark they be!

The beauty of the heaven and the beauty of the earth are not apart, but make one whole.

(The cold gray wind of Autumn sweeps on, as darkness slowly falls.)

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